**By John Strand**

In the tradition of recognizing achievement in the arena of freedom advancement, The Rochester Freedom Singers will be awarding the first annual "Rochester Freedom Award" at their holiday concert in early December.

"The award will go to an individual who, through his or her actions, has made an impact towards someone's or some group's personal rights or liberty," said Susan David, chairperson of the awards committee.

"Furthermore," David continued, "It must be an individual who provides an outstanding example of integrity and dedication in the fight for freedom, in whatever form that takes."

A member of the Rochester Freedom Singers, a mixed chorus of people of many walks of life, David said the award has worked consistently within the community for freedom."

Scheduled for Dec. 3-4, The Freedom Singers' holiday concert, "Light in the Darkness," will be directed by Dr. Theodore F. Ashizawa. Besides the freedom award ceremony, the musical program fits the group's mission of "inclusion" with a varied and powerful musical presentation of message and art.

Nominations for the award emanated from the chorus membership earlier this fall. It is to be an annual event in conjunction with the group's holiday concert held at the First Universalist Church at 150 South Clinton Ave. in Rochester.

With nearly 40 singing members this fall, the Freedom Singers nominations represented a variety of people in the community and area, said David. Tickets will be sold in advance for $5.



# Freedom Singers to present award to Ramona Santorelli

**By John Strand**

Ramona Santorelli, a leader of the Topfree movement in Rochester, which helped to win increased civil rights for women in New York State, is the recipient of the first annual Rochester Freedom Award, to be presented by the Rochester Freedom Singers at their holiday concert on Dec. 4.

"Since July of 1992, women in New York have had a legal right to enjoy the same comforts that men have taken for granted since the late 1930s," said Susan David, chairperson of the Freedom Singers award committee. "Through her efforts the law has changed."

A catalyst for this expansion of personal freedom for women in New York State, the effects of which have rippled across the nation, Santorelli and the Topfree Seven movement stirred public sentiment, aroused public debate, and effected change in a courageous way, according to the committee. Santorelli has had numerous national media opportunities to express feminist concepts about women's rights, bodies and self-image.

"In the tradition of Susan B. Anthony, Ramona deserves the award for her groundbreaking efforts in the Topfree movement," said Susan David. "Ramona, as inspiration and spiritual center, has brought this issue coast to coast," she said.

The presentation of the Rochester Freedom Award will be held in conjunction with the annual Rochester Freedom Singers holiday concerts on Dec. 3-4, at 8 p.m. at the First Universalist Church of Rochester, 150 S. Clinton Ave. Last year the local chorus honored Joseph Steffan, national gay military activist; however, Santorelli's award reflects a new tradition for recognizing local leaders.

Honorable mention Freedom Awards go to Jennifer Hyman of the *Democrat & Chronicle* for her Pulitzer nomination expose of the CIA's involvement at RIT, and to Karen Hagberg, a Rochester resident who has gained prominence for her studies and teaching in the Suzuki piano method for children.

It is tentatively expected that Joe Steffan will make a guest appearance at the Freedom Singers holiday concert, which is entitled "Light in the Darkness." He will also be assisting with the awards presentation to Santorelli.

Directed by Dr. Theodore F. Ashizawa, the 35-member chorus of men and women will perform the Rochester premier of "Carol of the Birds," a traditional Catalonian carol composed by New York City composer Howard Rosner and commissioned by the music ministry of the Church of the Presentation.

Benjamin Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb" will be the focal piece of the concert, featuring, among others, Joe Steffan as a tenor soloist, unless his legal proceedings against the Department of the Navy preclude his attendance here.

Traditional holiday songs, classical pieces, and various cultural works round out the program, according to Ashizawa. The chorus will also feature Cecelia Sun, Freedom Singers accompanist and doctoral student of music at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester.

Santorelli's award presentation will take place during the Saturday concert performance.